

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COASTAL AREA MANAGEMENT

LAND USE PLAN

FOR

OCEAN ISLE BEACH, NORTH CAROLINA

1981

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OCEAN ISLE BEACH LAND USE PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The development of a Land Use Plan for Ocean Isle Beach represents, perhaps, the most significant policy formulation effort in the history of the community. Ocean Isle Beach, a relatively "young" community, was incorporated as a Town in 1959 with the 1960 U.S. Census reporting only 5 permanent residents. By the 1970 census, however, the then 11 year-old community increased by 73 permanent residents to a total of 78. The 1980 preliminary U.S. Census figure show the Town's population to be 180. Because of the Town's attraction as a clean, family-oriented beach, Ocean Isle Beach's population will likely continue to grow.

The Town itself is basically a seasonal, residential resort community. The community consists of a six-mile long island, located off the Brunswick County Coast and separated from the mainland by the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. The island runs from west to east, being bordered on the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north by the Intracoastal Waterway.

The analysis of existing conditions and trends for Ocean Isle Beach implied several major conclusions:

- -- Population increases, both seasonal and permanent, as well as urbanized development is likely to continue.
- -- The major possible constraints to that development are the provision of adequate water and waste water disposal facilities, and,
- -- If adequate water and sewer services are provided, and development continues to occur, the Town will have to strictly comply with existing federal, State and its own land use controls in order to maintain sound environmental management practices.

The rest of this Summary contains a synopsis of the identified land use issues, policy choices for addressing the issues, and a schedule for implementing the policies.

I. POLICY STATEMENTS:

The acquired issues which must be addressed include resource protection, resource production and management, economic and community development, and continuing public participation.

In addition to the four required issue areas, the Coastal Resources Commission assigned two other "special" issues to Ocean Isle Beach which also must be addressed. These two issues are: ocean front erosion/ inlet stabilization, and Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway easements. The policy statements included in this section were developed from citizen input (gathered from a series of questionnaires), meetings with the Town's Planning Board and discussions with local elected officials.

A. RESOURCE PROTECTION:

Ocean Isle Beach's major concern in the area of resource protection deals with the management of development in environmentally sensitive areas. State and locally issued development permits are already required before any development activity can take place in the identified areas of environmental concern. In Ocean Isle Beach these Areas of Environmental Concern encompass Coastal Wetlands, Estuarine Waters, Estuarine Shorelines, Public Trust Areas, and the Ocean Hazard Areas, which include the Ocean Erodible Area, High Hazard Flood Area, Inlet Hazard Area, and sand dunes. Coastal wetlands are those regularly flooded marsh areas which often contain specific marsh plant species. Estuarine Waters and shorelines are those waters and adjacent shore areas subject to tide and saltwater intrusion and are important as nurseries for many marine life species. The Public Trust Waters involve all navigable waters in and around Ocean Isle Beach. Ocean Hazard Areas are considered natural hazard areas along the Atlantic Ocean shorelines, where, because of special vulnerability to erosion or other adverse effects of sand, wind, and water, unregulated development could unnecessarily endanger life or property. Coastal wetlands, estuarine waters, and estuarine shorelines are all part of the estuarine system.

1. Estuarine System:

For the AECs within the Estuarine System, highest priority will be given to land uses which are water-dependent. Appropriate water-dependent uses include:

- (a) Navigational Channels
- (b) Hydraulic Dredging
- (c) Drainage Ditches
- (d) Non-agricultural Drainage
- (e) Marinas
- (f) Docks and Piers
- (g) Bulkheads and other Shore Stabilization Measures

Ocean Isle Beach believes that these uses will promote the conservation and protection of the Estuarine System. Second priority will be given to uses which require water access. A third priority will be given to uses which are not necessarily water-dependent or require water access, but are supportive of these uses and can demonstrate that no major or irreversible damage will result to the AEC. All approved uses will be required to comply with the Use Standards of the North Carolina Administrative Code (15 NCAC 7H), and the local ordinances of Ocean Isle Beach.

2. Estuarine Shorelines are defined as non-ocean shorelines which are especially vulnerable to erosion, flooding, or other adverse effects of wind and water and are intimately connected to the estuary. This area extends from the mean high water level or normal water level along the estuaries, sounds, bays, and brackish waters for a distance of 75 feet inland. These areas are signifi-

cant because development within the shorelines can influence the quality of estuarine life and is subject to the damaging process of shorefront erosion and flooding.

Residential, recreational, and commercial uses may be permitted within the Estuarine Shoreline, provided that:

- a. a substantial chance of pollution occurring from the development does not exist;
- natural barriers to erosion are preserved and not substantially weakened or eliminated;
- c. the construction of impervious surfaces and areas not allowing natural drainage is limited to only that necessary for developments;
- d. standards of the North Carolina Sedimentation Pollution Control Act 1973 are met;
- e. development does not have a significant adverse impact on estuarine resources;
- f. development does not significantly interfere with existing public rights or access to, or use of, navigable waters or public resources;

3. Ocean Hazard Policies:

For AECs in the Ocean Hazards category, Ocean Isle Beach's general policy and management objective is to establish and implement standards that serve to eliminate unreasonable danger to life and property and achieve a balance between the financial, safety, and social factors that are involved in hazard area development.

Suitable land uses in Ocean Hazard Areas generally are those which eliminate unreasonable danger to life and property and which achieve a balance between the financial, safety, and social factors involved in hazard area development. Ocean shoreline erosion control activities and dune establishment/stabilization are acceptable types of land uses. Residential, commercial, and recreational land uses are permissible in Ocean Hazard Areas provided that:

- a. Development is set back a minimum of 30 times the average annual erosion rate from the frontal dune or first line of vegetation. The current erosion set back line is 60 feet in Ocean Isle Beach.
- b. Development does not involve the significant removal or relocation of frontal dune sand or vegetation thereon.
- c. Development is consistent with minimum lot size and set back requirements established by the Ocean Isle Beach subdivision and zoning ordinances.
- d. Development implements means and methods to mitigate or minimize adverse impacts of the project.

- e. Development of growth-inducing public facilities such as sewers, waterlines, roads, bridges, and erosion control measures is constructed only in cases where either:
 - 1. National or State interests and public benefits are clearly overriding factors,
 - 2. facilities would not exacerbate existing hazards or damage natural buffers,
 - 3. facilities would be reasonably safe from flood and erosion related damage,
- f. Ocean Isle Beach, recognizing that erosion along the beaches has caused many problems, supports beach renourishment projects that would allow approved suitable spoils to be taken from Intracoastal Waterway dredging to be placed on designated areas on the island.
- g. The Town, though aware that inlet migration is a natural ongoing process, supports stabilization of Inlet Hazard Areas near the Atlantic Ocean. This area is also subject to the minimum building set back line for Ocean Isle Beach. It is the policy of Ocean Isle Beach to not permit developments within the 30-year set back line.

4. Natural and Cultural Resources:

Although Ocean Isle Beach has not been systematically surveyed for its archeological significance, the N. C. Division of Archives and History has recorded one prehistoric site, located on N. C. 904. It is the belief of Ocean Isle Beach that prior to development in areas with potential cultural resource value, that the area be investigated to determine its significance.

5. Physical Constraints to Development:

The physical constraints to development in Ocean Isle Beach include a small airport, soil types, horizontal well fields on the island; and fragile areas, that coincide with the Town's AECs and which were included in the preceding policy discussion. The only major limitation in terms of community facilities is the lack of a central sewer system. Ocean Isle Beach was developed primarily as a quiet, relaxing, family-oriented beach. This appeal attracts thousands of visitors each year. It is vital, therefore, to the Town that this appeal continues to be maintained at the highest level of quality. Therefore, the Town's policies on development within constraints are:

a. Residential development will not be encouraged in airport approach areas.

- b. As long as the Town relies upon the system of horizontal well fields for part of its water supply, development on the land above these wells will not be allowed.
- c. Ocean Isle Beach's policies on development in fragile areas are the same as those stated for Areas of Environmental Concern.
- d. Until such time a central sewage collection and disposal system can be developed, growth and development will not be encouraged in areas where septic tanks will not function. All septic tanks must be in compliance with State Health Regulations.
- e. Development will be discouraged in areas where soils will not suport the weight of proposed structures. Development may be constructed if corrective measures for stabilizing building foundations are incorporated into development design.

B. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: RESOURCE PROTECTION POLICIES:

In order to implement the above policies, Ocean Isle Beach will take the following actions.

- 1. During Fiscal Year 1981-82, Ocean Isle Beach will authorize the Mayor to apply for funds from the Office of Coastal Management in order to provide assistance in reviewing its local ordinances for consistency with CAMA.
- 2. Also, for the next four fiscal years, the Town will continue to participate in the Federal Flood Insurance Program, and enforce its local Flood Damage and Prevention Ordinance.
- 3. The Planning Board, throughout the next four fiscal years, will review all proposals for development, in order to determine consistency with overall management policies and objectives, and make recommendations to the Town Board.

C. RESOURCE PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT:

The production or maintenance of those resources, in many instances, is the economic foundation of many of these communities. Sound management policies are crucial since these economic resources are usually either extractions from coastal lands or waters, or are aesthetically valued for recreational uses or as tourist attractions. In Ocean Isle Beach, the most important resources relate to the community's appeal as a recreational, vacation and tourist area.

Commercial and recreational fishing are also important resources to Ocean Isle Beach, along with tourism.

1. Recreational Resources:

- a. Ocean Isle Beach will strictly enforce its existing sign ordinance and litter law to help keep the community neat and attractive.
- b. The Town will continue to support the expansion of recreational opportunities that do not seriously detract from the general aesthetics of the community, or do not cause an unsafe generation of traffic.
- c. Ocean Isle Beach will consider the development, adoption and enforcement of a Community Appearance Ordinance and continue to support and encourage private beautification efforts.
- d. The Town will continue to support public access to the beach strand.

2. Commercial and Recreational Fishing:

In recognition of the importance of the fishing industry to Ocean Isle Beach, the Town sets forth the following policy statement.

a. Ocean Isle Beach is aware that fishing areas such as the Eastern Channel (Old Sound Creek), need to have stable and sufficient flow of salt water in order to nourish the breeding estuaries, sustain adequate channel depths for the maneuvering of boats and to provide proper flushing for pollution control. Therefore, the Town will support and continue to seek carefully managed removal of siltation deposits and sand build—up from the Tubb's Inlet and Shallotte Inlet areas.

3. Off-Road Vehicles:

a. Ocean Isle Beach will take steps to see that the existing ordinance which prohibits the operation of off-road vehicles on any beach strand or sand dune, is strictly enforced, and that appropriate penalties for violations are imposed.

D. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: RESOURCE PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT:

- 1. In Fiscal Year 1981-82, the Mayor will work with the Town Planning Board and the Building Inspector, to review, and if necessary, make recommendations for revisions to the Town's sign ordinance and litter ordinance. The Town Board will consider those recommendations.
- 2. In Fiscal Year 1982-83, the Mayor of the Town will seek assistance from State and Federal agencies in order to develop better information on the impact of dredging the Tubb's and Shallotte Inlets.

- 3. In Fiscal Year 1983-84, the Town Board will direct the Planning Board to research the steps and procedures necessary for the development and adoption of a Community Appearance Ordinance.
- 4. In Fiscal Year 1984-85, the Town Board will conduct a study of ways to increase the efficiency of collection and removal of trash by the Town's sanitation unit in a more cost-effective and energy conservation manner. The board may seek the assistance and service of outside planning consultants.
- 5. During the next four fiscal years, the Town Board will continue to encourage the efforts of private citizen's groups, such as the Ocean Isle Beautification Committee, by providing limited financial assistance toward the purchase of seeds or shrubbery for community planting projects.
- 6. Ocean Isle will continue to seek permits for the dredging of the Eastern Channel area.

E. ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

The economic vitality of Ocean Isle Beach, as stated previously, relates directly to tourism. Second-home sales and cottage rentals, which attract thousands of visitors each summer, along with increasing numbers of day visitors from inland communities, are important elements to the island's economy.

The land development pattern in Ocean Isle Beach, is mostly residental. Nearly all of the commercial development is located along N.C. 904. Although both the permanent and seasonal populations are projected to increase, the overall land development pattern will likely remain the same.

Ocean Isle Beach is very much concerned about the future growth in economic and community development. As the population gradually increases, the economic base will probably also expand, more housing will be developed, and increased pressures will be placed on existing community facilities. Sound public investment decisions will also have to be made. All of these issues and others are important in the formulation of the following land use policies.

1. Local Committment to Service Provisions:

The major service provided by Ocean Isle Beach is water. The current water service area, according to the Town's Water Distribution Plan, covers virtually the entire developable portion of the island. Water service is readily available to all new development. The Town is committed to providing water service to new areas according to it's current water expansion policies. The Town hopes to eventually develop a centralized sewage collection and disposal system. Whenever such a system is developed, Ocean Isle Beach will also provide sewer service to newly developing and older developed areas.

Policy choices are:

- a. Residential and Commercial development, in accordance with provisions of the Ocean Isle Beach Zoning and Subdivision Ordnances, will continue to be encouraged, as long as State Health Regulations for septic tank placement are met.
- b. The Town will continue to seek financial assistance to develop a central sewage collection and disposal system on the island, in order to avoid possible problems resulting from sole reliance upon septic tanks for all development.

2. Types of Urban Growth Patterns:

The development pattern of Ocean Isle Beach is dominated by residential development. Currently, no mobile homes are allowed within the Town's jurisdiction. The first and second row of interior developable lots from the ocean front, is almost exclusively composed of single-family and multi-family homes. It is the Town's intentions, as reflected in its zoning ordinance and zoning map, to discourage commercial-type developments in areas near the ocean front. Motels or apartment rentals are commercial in nature, but are allowed in the Town's zoning ordinance for these areas because the uses are predominantly residential. Low-rise residential development, both multi-family and single-family are desirable near the ocean front areas. Near the center of the island, along the finger canals, single-family development is considered the most practical type of use. Most of the lots there are relatively small and portions of this area cannot support septic tank placement without the addition of suitable fill material. Development with higher density levels than single-family or twofamily uses may not be desirable in the finger canal areas because of possible effluent intrusion into the canals.

Policy choices are:

a. Since it is the desire of Ocean Isle Beach to avoid incompatible land uses, the Town will continue to enforce its current ordinances and local building permit program, to help achieve a desirable balance between commercial and residential development. The Town will also continue to support the State CAMA permit process and State Health Regulations regarding septic tank placement.

3. Committment to Federal and State Programs:

Ocean Isle Beach recognizes the importance of the operation of State and Federal programs, some of which provide necessary improvements for the community. Ocean Isle Beach will continue to support these programs.

4. Assistance to Channel Maintenance and Beach Nourishment:

Ocean Isle Beach is supportive of the Corps of Engineers' maintenance of the Intracoastal Waterway and is committed to providing suitable spoil placement sites. Ocean Isle Beach is generally supportive of keeping new development out of the Corps 1,000-foot easement along the AIWW, however, the Town believes that existing structures in the easement area should be recognized and protected.

Beach nourishment is also an important concern of Ocean Isle Beach. The Town recognizes that one of the major threats to any beach is erosion, which is by and large a natural occurrence.

Specific policies for channel maintenance and beach nourishment are:

- a. Ocean Isle Beach will continue to provide suitable spoil sites for dredging of the Intracoastal Waterway by the Corps of Engineers. New development will not be encouraged in the existing spoil easement area.
- b. The Town will seek Federal and State assistance in support of beach nourishment projects, and encourage local private efforts.

5. Tourism:

a. Ocean Isle Beach will continue to support and promote tourism as its main economic base. The development of non-intensive recreational and commercial land uses will be encouraged in order to enhance services for the public.

6. Beach and Waterfront Access:

a. Ocean Isle Beach will continue to support free and open public access to the ocean front and other waterways by seeking State and/or Federal financial assistance to develop beach walkovers and boat access ramps.

F. IMPLEMENTATION STATEGY: ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

In order to implement the above policies, Ocean Isle Beach will take the following actions:

- 1. In Fiscal Year 1981-82, the Town Board will develop an official street and house numbering system in order to facilitate locating residences in emergency situations and in order to develop a uniform address system.
- 2. In Fiscal Year 1982-83, Ocean Isle Beach will seek funding assistance to develop more public waterfront access ways.

G. CONTINUING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Involving the citizens in planning and govermental discussions which lead to decisions which affect them, is an important matter recognized by Ocean Isle Beach. In the development of this plan, a Citizen Participation Plan was developed, a series of questionnaires distributed, and public meetings were conducted. All of these activities were designed to give citizens an opportunity to provide input into the planning and policy formulation process. Efforts to involve the Town's citizenry will continue throughout the planning period.

H. ADDITIONAL SPECIFIED LOCAL ISSUES:

The Coastal Resources Commission has specified that certain issues, which it viewed as having particular significance in Ocean Isle Beach, be addressed in this land use plan. These issues are: (1) AIWW Easements, and (2) Inlet Stabilization/Ocean Front Erosion. Discussion and policy implications for these issues were presented under other policy statement areas.

SECTION II: LAND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

The land classification system provides a uniform way of looking at how the use of land interacts with environmentally sensitive areas and with the development needs of a particular locality. It is not a strict regulatory device in the sense of a zoning ordinance or zoning map. It represents more of a tool to aide in understanding the relationships between various land use categories and how these relationships help shape local policy. Particular attention is focused on the intensity at which land is used and the level of services needed to support that intensity. The regulations for the Coastal Area Management Act state:

"The land classification system provides a framework to be used by local government to identify the future use of all lands in each county. The designation of land classes allows the local government to illustrate their policy statements as to where and to what density they want growth to occur, and where they want to conserve natural and cultural resources by quiding growth.: (7B.0204) (a)

Only three of the Coastal Resources Commissions' five land classifications and one sub-class, are relevant to the land development policies of Ocean Isle Beach. They are identified and described below.

A. DEVELOPED

The developed class of land use provides for continued intensive development and redevelopment of existing cities. Areas to be classified as "developed" include lands currently developed for urban purposes or approaching a density of 500 dwellings per square mile that are provided with usual municipal or public services including at least public water, sewer, recreational facilities, police and fire protection.

Within Ocean Isle Beach, the areas complying with the above definition, except for the provision of central sewage service, include: the commercial area on N.C. 904 north of the Intracoastal Waterway; the residential area along the first eight finger canals near the island, and; the first and second row of lots along the oceanfront, east of N.C. 904 to Lumberton Street. Lots in these areas are nearly completely developed, and all of the undeveloped acreage will likely be developed by or before 1990.

B. TRANSITION

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Transition land is classified as those lands providing for future intensive urban development within the ensuing ten years on lands that are most suitable and that will be scheduled for provision of necessary public utilities and services. They may also provide for additional growth when additional lands in the devel-

oped class are not available or when they are severely limited for development.

Lands classified "transition" may include:

1. lands currently having urban services, and

2. other lands necessary to accommodate the urban population and economic growth anticipated within the planning jurisdiction over the next ten years.

Lands classified for the latter reason must:

- a. be served or be readily served by public water, sewer, and other urban services including public streets, and
- b. be generally free of severe physical limitations for urban development.

The lands in Ocean Isle Beach that will be classified "transitional" are those areas adjacent to the currently developed areas on the island. This includes the land area around the remaining finger canals (currently unopened), all of the remaining platted lots on the island, and the unsubdivided land on the west end.

The relationship between the "developed and transition" classification is usually an important one.

The Developed and Transition classes should be the only lands under active consideration by a county or municipality for intensive urban development requiring urban services. The area within these classes is where detailed local land use and public investment planning will occur. State and federal expenditures on projects associated with urban development (water, sewer, urban street systems, etc.) will be guided to these areas. Most of the "transitional" lands in Ocean Isle Beach already have access to the Town's water system and are included in the municipal service area (i.e., police and fire protection).

C. CONSERVATION

The "conservation" class provides for effective long-term management of significant limited or irreplaceable areas. This management may be needed because of its natural, cultural, recreational, productive or scenic values. This class should be limited to lands that contain: major wetlands; essentially undeveloped shorelands that are unique, fragile, or hazardous for development, necessary wildlife habitat or areas that have a high probability for providing necessary habitat conditions; publicly owned water supply watersheds and aquifers; and forest lands that are undeveloped and will remain undeveloped for commercial purposes.

In Ocean Isle Beach, the lands described as the following Areas of Environmental Concern, are listed in this classification; Coastal Wetlands (the unplatted, undeveloped lands south of the

Intracoastal Waterway, and north of Old Sound Creek); Estuarine Shorelines, (excluding areas adjacent to already-developed lots); Inlet Hazard Areas, and the Ocean Erodible Area.

D. CONSERVATION SPOIL

This is a sub-class of conservation and will be used to classify lands which would generally be suited for use as spoil areas for the maintenance of major waterways, but not for other uses. This would include areas used, or to be used by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

SECTION III: RELATIONSHIP OF POLICIES AND LAND CLASSIFICATIONS

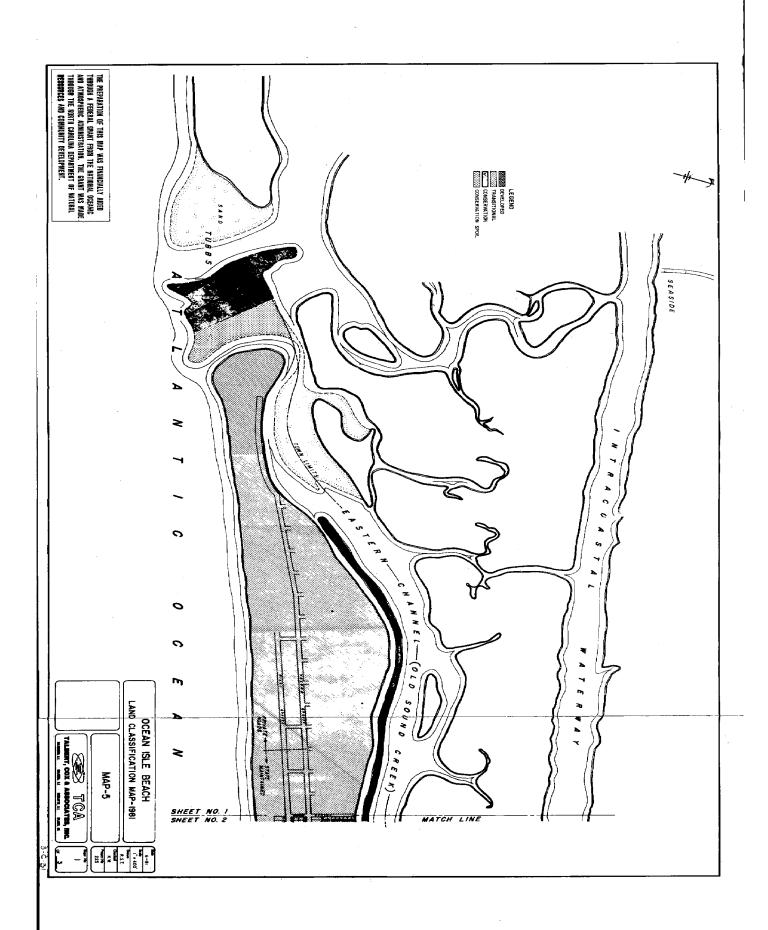
A. DEVELOPED AND TRANSITION CLASSES

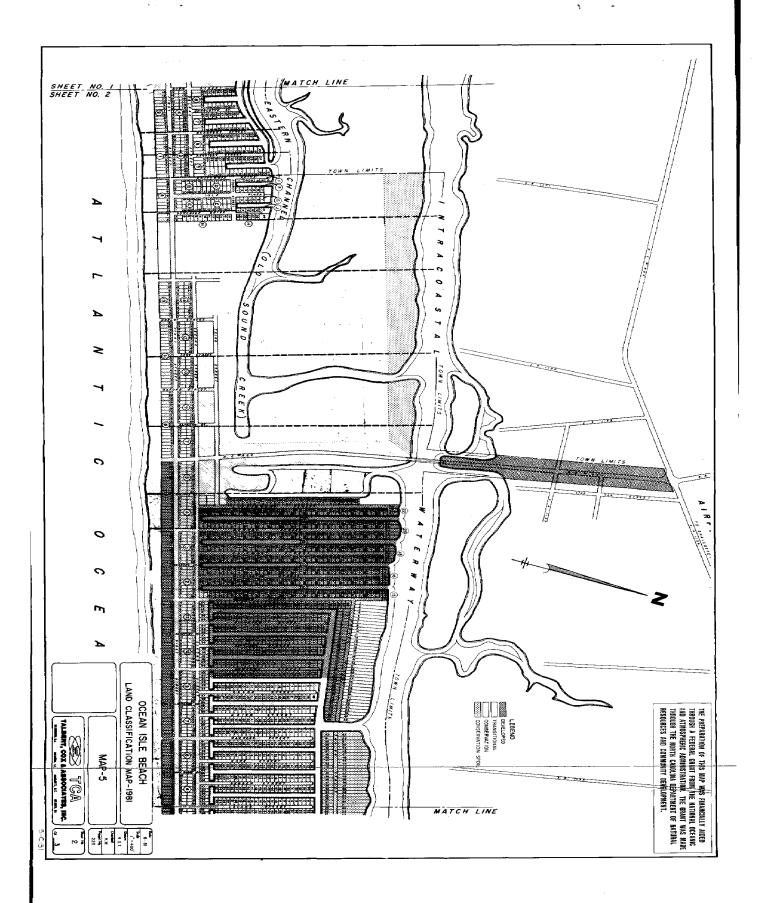
The development of both single-family and multi-family structures is likely to continue in Ocean Isle Beach. The developed and transition classes were specifically designed to accommodate these projected more intensive developments and land uses. This will include commercial uses, parks and open space, community facilities and transportation. Hazardous or offensive uses such as power plants, airports and storage facilities will not be in these classes. Where identified constraints such as poor soils, AIWW easements, horizontal well fields, or other fragile areas occur within these classes, the areas will not be considered as Developed or Transition.

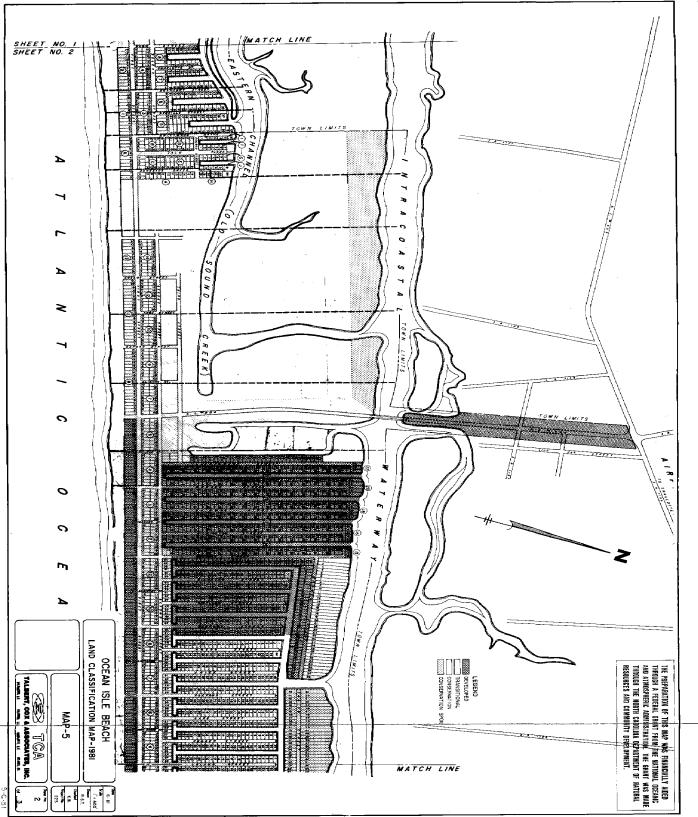
B. CONSERVATION AND CONSERVATION SPOIL CLASSES

The Conservation Class is designated to provide for effective long-term management of significant limited or irreplaceable areas which include wetlands, undeveloped shorelines that are unique, fragile, or hazardous for development, wildlife habitat areas, publicly owned watersheds and aquifers and undeveloped forest lands and cultural and historical sites. In Ocean Isle Beach, development should be restricted to water-dependent uses such as piers, bulkheads, marinas, etc. Policy Statements under Resource Protection, and Resource Production and Management issues, address the Town's intentions concerning the Conservation Class.

The Conservation Spoil Class will apply to lands which must be managed on a long-term basis, but are suitable as spoil sites for the maintenance of major waterways, including the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway by the Corps of Engineers.







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